

**REMARKS**

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-15 are pending. Claims 1-6 are amended, and claims 7-15 are added. Claims 1 and 10 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the

**Claim for Priority**

The Examiner has acknowledged the Applicant's claim for foreign priority.

**Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph**

Claims 2 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In order to overcome this rejection, claims 2 and 6 are amended to correct each of the deficiencies specifically pointed out by the Examiner. Applicant respectfully submits that the claims, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

**Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)**

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Tashman et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

**Amendments to Independent Claim 1**

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, independent claim 1 is amended herein to recite a combination of elements directed to a circulating food and drink transport apparatus, including a plurality of plates, each including:

a driving sprocket and a driven sprocket, both arranged at the corners of the traveling lane, and engaging the circular link chain for making a circular operation, said driving sprocket being fixed to a moving plate supported by a plurality of slide bosses mounted to a first fixed plate; and

a male screw of a first control knob rotatably supported by the first fixed plate, being screwed into a travel nut fixed to the moving plate,

whereby when the first control knob is rotated, the driving sprocket is moved to change a conveyance path length.

Support for the combination of elements set forth in claim 1 can be seen in FIGS. 7 and 8. See also pages 10 and 11 of the specification.

By contrast, as can be seen in Tashman FIG. 2, for example, the driving sprocket of Tashman will never be moved to change a conveyance path length. In other words, in the cited reference, it is impossible for a user to shorten the conveyance path of the link chain.

Generally speaking, a circular link chain becomes loose in proportion to the times of use. Therefore, the circular chain gets longer little by little according to its daily work, and finally begins to work abnormally (see Fig. 10).

In the present invention as set forth in independent claim 1, however, it is possible at anytime to adjust the length of the conveyance path of the link chain by operating the control knob. That is, the conveyance path is first adjusted to the minimum length by this knob, and thereafter is lengthened occasionally according to its necessity.

Therefore independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance

**Added Independent Claim 10**

In addition, independent claim 10 is added herein to recite a combination of elements directed to a circulating food and drink transport apparatus, including a plurality of plates, wherein each of the plates is connected to and disconnected from an adjoining one of the plates by a single removable link pin.

Support for the combination of elements set forth in claim 10 can be seen in FIGS. 5(c), 18(c), and 19(c).

By contrast, as can be seen in Tashman et al. FIGS. 6 and 9, this document merely discloses rectangular shaped tray holders 111, fixed to a conveyer belt 16, each of the tray holders being separate from each other. This structure requires significantly more components and does not achieve the simplicity of design or operation of the present invention.

At least for the reasons above, the Applicant respectfully submits that the combination of elements as set forth in each of independents claims 1 and 10 is not disclosed or made obvious by the prior art of record, including Tashman et al.

Bildsoe (U.S. 3,554, 360) discloses crescent shaped plate. However, Bildsoe was not used to reject the claims of the present invention, and cannot make up for the deficiencies of Tashman et al.

Therefore, independent claim 10 are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner will note that dependent claims 2-6 are amended to place them in better form, and dependent claims 7-9 and 11-15 are added to set forth additional novel features of the invention.

All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) are respectfully requested.

### **CONCLUSION**

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

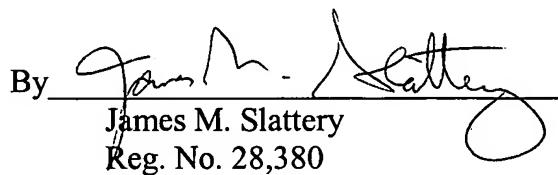
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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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